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ABSTRACT

This document defines education as the process of the integrated development of an individual that takes place throughout life, and aims at one's complete fulfillment in the intellectual, spiritual, moral, emotional, physical, and other domains. Culture is defined as the complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. Because of the convergence in the two definitions, one can understand how education can contribute to cultural development, enriching culture, and making it available to everyone. Culture is conditioned by man's national and social environment, and therefore one finds a great diversity of culture in the region of Asia and the Pacific. Many countries in the region have a rich cultural heritage having been the seat of once great kingdoms and empires that left impressive cultural monuments. The Asia Pacific region includes the great religions of the world such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Shintoism. People's ethical, moral, and cultural values are anchored on these religions. Through education, religion based values have developed to suit the changing demands of different societies arising from modernization. Education has played both a moderating and awakening role in the face of the unprecedented development of science and technology leading to industrialization and modernization. Because industrialization was imported, it carries with it the cultural baggage of the countries of origin, which are often not in harmony with local sociocultural values. Tensions arise in such relationships as: (1) man, nature; (2) man, fellow man; (3) man, self; and (4) man, God. Each of these relationships is discussed. (DK)

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CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION TO CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

"The Contribution of Education to Culture Development in Asia and the Pacific"

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The Contribution of Education to Culture Development in Asia and the Pacific

One of the documents of the forty-third session of the International Conference on Education defined education as the process of the integrated development of an individual which takes place throughout life and aims at one's complete fulfilment in the intellectual, spiritual, moral, emotional, physical and other domains.

On the otherhand, the World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico, 1982) defined culture as "the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features, that characterize a society or social group".

Looking at the two definitions one can see so much convergence. It is therefore not difficult to understand how education can contribute to cultural development - defined as "the enrichment of culture and making it available to everyone".

It is often said that the capacity of men to posses culture - to create, transmit and transform culture is what distinguishes human beings from other animals and living things. It is only human beings who possess a complex reportoire of knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, traditions, and sophisticated language.

Culture is however conditioned by his national and social environment and therefore it is not surprising to find a great diversity of culture in the region of Asia and the Pacific - a region so vast and diverse, which is composed of small countries ranging from the size of Kiribati Islands (234 sq.mi.) to that of China (3.7 million sq.mi.); a socio-cultural and economic development at different stages - from least developed (e.g. Bangladesh, Nepal, Viet Nam, Laos, etc.) to the most developed (e.g. Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Australia).

Many countries in the region have a rich cultural heritage having been the seat of once great kingdoms and empires, e.g. the Madjapahit Empire in Southeast Asia, the Mongolian Empire in Mongolia, the Ming

Dynasty of China, the Asoke Kingdom of India, Chakri Dynasty of Thailand, to name a few.

These empires and kingdoms/dynasties left impressive cultural monuments, e.g. the Mongolian Palace in Ulan Bator; the Great Walls and the Ming Tombs of China; the Taj Mahal in India; the Borobudur in Indonesia, and the Grand Palace and the Sukhothai in Thailand; the Angkor Wat in Cambodia; the Moenjodaro in Pakistan; Bamiyan in Afghanistan, Cultural Triangle in Sri Lanka, Paharpur Vihara/Bagerhat in Bangladesh; and Hue in Viet Nam - to name a few. One needs only to read history books of these countries to realize how education is contributing to the development of the culture symbolized by cultural monuments, and the various non-material culture, e.g. socio-cultural values.

In the Asia-Pacific region, one also finds the great religions of the world - Christianity, Islam, Budhism, Hindusim, Confucianism, and Shintoism. The last two of course are more philosophies of life rather than religion per se. By and large, people's ethical, moral and cultural values are anchored on these religions. However, through education, religion-based values have been developed to suit the changing demands of different societies arising from modernization.

Education and Modernization

Education, though, has played a both moderating and awakening role in the face of the unprecedented development of science and technology leading industralization and modernization. In most countries in Asia and the Pacific, industralization was not indigenous. It came by and large from outside, through and many cases, colonization. Being largely imported, they carry with them the cultural baggages of the countries of origin, which are often not in harmony with cherished Asia-Pacific socio-cultural values which give rise to tensions, such as in (1) man-nature relationship; (2) man-fellowmen relationship; (3) man-self relationship; and (4) man's relationship with God.

Man-nature relationship is disrupted with the shift from the concept of "mother earth", where it is a cardinal sin to "rape" her to one where

environment/earth is viewed as being there to serve man now, unmindful of the requirements of the future generations of humankind. Indiscriminate exploitation of environment to satisfy materials needs reflect a distorted image of this relationship. One is oblivious of the fact that nature or the environment does not belong to us, we are borrowing it from the future generations. We ought to be stewards and not exploiters of the environment.

With the advent of industrialization and modernization, indigenous values tend to be relegated in the background. This in view of the fact that the accepted model of industrialization and modernization is based on a different philosophy of life, e.g. on enterprise market economy. It is not unusual then for the new philosophy of life to cause some disturbances on the man-fellowmen relationship, some examples of which are the shift from co-operativeness, groupism and social-oriented traits (e.g. extended family) - to competitiveness, individualism, individual-oriented traits and nuclear family.

Likewise, modernization tend to distort people's indigenous values and brings changes in man-self relationships such as a shift from humaneness, spiritualism and ascribed status - to inhumaneness, materialism and individual achievement orientation. In some societies there is a tendency to assess people in terms of their market value, instead of their character. There is also the tendency to escape from personal problems through the use of drugs, alcoholism and other social diviation. Many are attracted by the glitters of easy money and are even lured into selling their flesh (e.g. prostitution). There are of course some Asian countries which borrowed western technologies without discarding their own value behaviour standards. Some of them have made significant economic progress without sacrificng social harmony.

In many societies modernization also tend to weaken spirituality and religious moorings. This is not to say that modernization alone is responsible for the erosion of the traditional form of religiousity based on Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, etc. A shift in socio-political ideology has also changed people's adherence to certain religion

The issue is how effective has education been in reconciling the philosophical bases of religion-based values, free enterprise economy-based values and centrally planned-based values? Has education really served as the stablilzing factor in the face of conflicting demands of spiritually-based versus materialistic-based value?

In all these tensions in regards to man-nature relationship, man-fellowship relationship, and man's transcendental relationship - it is education that has help him resolve the tension. In many countries the education system serves as a processing plant for the external influences, and as a bastion against any unnecessary erosion of the national culture.

International Education

One educational programme which has contributed immensely to cultural development in the region is the UNESCO Member States' programme of international education - the umbrella concept which encompass international understanding (understanding among peoples), co-operation, peace and human rights. In 1988, in a Regional Workshop on Education for International Understanding, Co-operation, peace for Human rights - representatives of Member States in the region agreed that for pedagogical purposes the components of international education need to be dealt with as separate learning elements. At the primary and secondary school levels, these concepts are to be viewed as chain links in the learning process, in which each link in the chain is joined to the learners' real world to better facilitate conceptualization. A conceptual framework for the integration of these concepts in science and social studies was developed, including exemplar teaching units.

Of the components of international education, perhaps the one single concept which serves as rallying point for the development of culture is that of international understanding, which includes respect for all peoples, their cultures, civilizations, values and ways of life, including domestic/ethnic cultures and cultures of other nations. It also encompasses the steps taken to encourage the elimination from textbooks of words, graphics, or anything else which might result in misunderstanding, mistrust, racism, contempt or hatred. This is not to belittle the

importance of co-operation, peace, human rights and fundamental freedom without which humankind will have difficulty of surviving. Disarmament education is also important if the world is to eventually be able to re-channel much of the annual US$900 billion in military expenditure the peace dividend towards helping, for example, the 1.2 billion people who live below the poverty threshold.

Humanistic, Moral and Ethical Values

Another educational programme which is contributing to cultural development is education for the promotion of humanistic, moral and cultural values. Humanistic values is concerned with fostering the value of learning to care for self, fellow-human beings, other species, the social, economic, and ecological welfare of one's society or nation, and the liveability of the earth now and in the future.

One has only to turn the pages of newspapers to see the ethnic, sectorial and communal feuds in different parts of the world, and certainly the Asia-Pacific region is no exception. One has only to look around to witness the uncaring attitude of man towards his environment. In view of humankind's lack of humaneness, he has abdicated his responsibility of being the steward of his fellowmen, other animals and his environment.

Moral values, a non-material aspect of culture, refers to (1) religion-based moral values derived, e.g. from Budhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, Taoism, etc.; (2) national principles as embodied in the constitution and/or philosophy of participating Member States; and (3) rationality-based (science-based), including for example, an inquiring mind, discipline and accuracy. There are also the ethical values which are (1) profession-related; (2) civics-related; and (3) individual and society related, e.g. honesty, sincerity, authenticity, etc. Education continues to play a pivotal role in the development of moral and ethical values.

Cultural values refer to cherish socio-cultural values, such as belief systems, customs and traditions, and institutions, e.g. as family and marriage. As already mentioned earlier, every nation has a set of core

values, the identity of which must not only be recognized, but respected. The programme of international understanding under international education is promoting such respect for cultural identity. However, even within a nation, particularly for big countries, where there are many and diverse cultural community groups - cultural identity needs to be recognized and respected. Very often, in a nation's quest for national unity, the unique cultures of ethnic communities are trampled upon. Perhaps one obvious manifestation of this is in requiring the use of the national language, despite the preponderance of many languages and dialects in a country. Certainly language is part of the culture of people, no matter how a small a group they may be. In the natural environment, it is important to maintain bio-diversity in that every living specie no matter how small has a role to play, e.g. insects are pollinators, fungi as decomposers and as sources of food. The issue is whether socio-cultural diversity is in fact healthy as it would signify the richness of country's culture?

In some Member States in the region, however, they have allowed the use of dialect or local language in the early primary grades, then gradually shift to the national language, then English. This helps maintain cultural identity. However, such a practice tend to accentuate the selecting and sorting function of education. The children whose mother tongue is not the national language find it difficult to survive even only basic education. In most countries, it is at the early stage i.e. the first three grades, in which most of the primary school drop-outs occur. And if they drop out at or before grade 3, then there is every likelihood that they will revert to illiteracy. If Member States in the region do not find a solution to the above-cited problem education for all in many countries will not be realized by the year 2000.

Role of NGOs

UNESCO has formed a partnership with its Member States in harnessing education as a means for the preservation, revival, adaptation and development of culture. In many Member States of the region, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also played an important role in this regard. One very good example is the Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) in Japan, which does not only serve Japan but the Member States in

the Asia-Pacific region. Among ACCU's joint programmes with Member States are on (1) Culture, co-production of music materials; and co-production of audio-visual materials; (2) Book development: co-production of children's books; and (3) Literacy: Joint production of materials for neo-literates in rural areas. Among other things, ACCU co-produce and distribute campaign materials such as posters, booklets for the protection of cultural heritage; co-production of cassette-tapes of folklore music, audio-visual materials and books; and organizers region-wide photo contests.

Conclusion

Invariably, in most Member States in Asia and the Pacific international education, values - humanistic, moral and cultural values are fibers woven in all school subjects - language, science and mathematics, social studies, etc.; as well as in non-formal education programmes. Hence, education is the life blood of cultural development, without which culture would not be dynamic and alive as they are today.